COUNTERING TERRORIST PROPAGANDA
AFTERWORDS

The most dangerous factor of today’s global terrorist threat is the ability of leaders and ideologists of the major terrorist groups to wage efficient propaganda and mobilization campaigns, initiate harmful radicalization of vulnerable population groups and, more often, of individuals. Without systematic and able efforts aimed at countering these “information” aspects of the terrorist activity, it would be simply impossible to ensure a decisive victory over international terrorism and protect the world community, all States and all people from terrorists.

Naturally, the States and their competent authorities play a leading and fundamental role in these efforts. It is their comprehensive work on a daily basis in strict compliance with the law that provides the main barrier protecting the society and citizens from terrorism and its information provocations. The leadership of the State authorities does not exclude but, on the contrary, implies the engagement of the civil society institutions, traditional religious communities, scientific and educational institutions, media and NGOs in the counter-terrorism efforts within their relevant functions and competence.

Russia has unbeatable experience in organizing and carrying out counter-terrorism activities, including in terms of efficient partnerships with non-governmental organizations. This publication is a clear and excellent example of that.

Deep knowledge of the counter-terrorism issues shown by the authors of this brochure, as well as the correct understanding of the State’s and society’s counter-terrorism agenda, international cooperation, willingness to collaborate with government structures results in a substantive, practical task-oriented and hence particularly helpful research and valuable recommendations on terrorism prevention.

We expect this publication to attract the attention of a vast Russian and foreign audience, especially youth, as well as anti-terrorism experts and practitioners, and therefore to make its contribution to the efforts aimed at countering the dissemination of terrorist ideology and combating terrorism.

Oleg Syromolotov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
Successful countering of terrorism in all its manifestation requires a substantial, well-considered, active and comprehensive fight against extremist propaganda. The guidebook by Maxim Grigoryev, head of the Foundation for the Study of Democracy, is an important step to this end contributing to the public condemnation and denunciation of the terrorism ideology.

This fight should involve active participation of the State bodies, as well as experts, clergy and representatives of public organizations. Civil society should adopt an aggressive and responsible stance in countering extremist ideas used by the criminal terrorist “International” in their attempts to justify their atrocities.

The publication in question includes practical recommendations on counter-narrative work in the counter-terrorism field. It is based on the critical analysis of a large data array on criminal activities of the so-called ISIL prohibited by court in the Russian Federation, as well as of other organizations trying to engage the youth in its illegal activity using false interpretations of religious postulates as a cover. It is important to note that the readers are offered specific arguments for use in counter-narrative efforts and lots of practical advice in terms of the organization of a system to counter and prevent export of hostile ideological surrogates to the Russian Federation.

Of course, we have much more work to do to erect an efficient public barrier against extremism and terrorism. Addressing this issue requires thorough, thoughtful and persistent work of scholars and experts.

I believe that the book by Maxim Grigoryev is a helpful and concrete example of such activities in the field of the “ideological counter-terrorism”. It can be used not only in the research activities, but also in the work of the State bodies, law enforcement agencies, as well as religious and public organizations.

Ilyas Umakhanov

Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Federation
of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Terrorism has always been and still is the gravest crime against humanity. It is always cruel and merciless in its methods of execution against people and can be similar to exterminatory wars. Such wars or certain acts require expendable human resources. This is why nowadays the fight for human minds on the ideological front is so critical. For terrorist ideologists, a human life has no value rather being just a mean to achieve the required goal. They are not ready to sacrifice themselves, instead using more appropriate material for these purposes, such as young people in the process of choosing their guides in life.

The goal of the State and public organizations is to warn young people against embracing the wrong path, against making fatal mistakes while opting for their life guides. The Russian Federation defines the fight against terrorism in all its manifestations as one of the main priorities of the State policy in ensuring the State security, which is stressed in the National Security Strategy. Everybody knows the saying: “Forewarned is forearmed”. Timely acquired knowledge makes it possible to prevent negative consequences of a hostile and purposeful influence on a person exerted by the entities concerned. Knowledge acquired beforehand makes it possible to save those who are by our side from taking wrong steps and doing wrong things. Knowledge acquired beforehand makes it possible to win against those who spread guidelines destroying human personality.

This guidebook prepared by the Foundation for the Study of Democracy helps to protect individuals and the society as a whole from the carefully and skillfully built traps set by the carriers of terrorist ideology. The Foundation has conducted a large-scale research to identify obvious and hidden forms of influence on the human personality with the aim of changing its perception of good and evil.

This guidebook will also be helpful for the entities and organizations that put counter-narrative efforts at the heart of their activities. Most of the time, the “one-size-fits-all” slogans and calls are simply not perceived by young people and lose in comparison with the well-directed, attractive and skillfully presented recruiting materials prepared by terrorist organizations. In order to successfully fight the enemy you need to know him. The guidebook identifies the forms, methods and ideological guidelines of the Da’esh international terrorist organization. This allows everyone to consciously assess the negative information charge flung into the Internet and to make the right decision.

Head of the Foundation for the Study of Democracy Maxim Grigoryev has approached the preparation of this guidebook on countering extremist and terrorist propaganda with all the civil responsibility for the fate of our State, for the fate of young people. It requires a serious study for practical guidance.

Vyacheslav Bocharov
Secretary of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation,
Hero of the Russian Federation
I was in Syria in May 2015, when the ISIL terrorists seized Palmyra and demonstratively shot hundreds of civilians belonging to the Syrian State – officials, doctors, teachers, nurses, members of their families – in the ancient amphitheater. It came as a shock to not only Syrians and their friends, but to the whole world in general that was challenged by terrorists. Destruction of an ancient arch we remember from the photos in our school textbooks once again confirmed that the activities of such terrorist organizations as ISIL is a challenge to the whole world, a threat to humanity, even if someone hopes to use them to fulfill their own selfish geopolitical goals.

Spiritual security of citizens is the most important part of the national security of the country, and religious competence, knowledge of norms and traditions of the ancestors guarantee that the individual will never get into the hands of recruiters. It is widely known that terrorists often recruit their supporters among young people making use of their inquisitive mind, thirst for new things or maybe the absence of social demand for them.

Outstanding counter-narrative efforts, spiritual education of young people, exposure of the truth about the activities of terrorist organizations, active cooperation of schools, higher educational institutions and traditional religious communities of Russia is the path we are to embark on together. And, of course, we should propose ideas that could entice young people.

I am confident that the book by Maxim Grigoryev is extremely helpful and much-needed; this book provides assistance in learning methods used by terrorist recruiters and an outlook on their activities based on the analysis of a huge amount of materials and personal experience of specialists who wage a bloody fight against the evil, which is terrorism.

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for the Development of Civil Society
and for Public and Religious Associations,
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